THE Reconstructionist

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WITH ALL DUE MODESTY

From a Federation Executive:

I have found *The Reconstructionist* a very stimulating journal in all respects. In particular I feel that the recent report on the activities of the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds was extremely well done and was the best all-around picture presented.

We regret to announce that our supply of The New Haggadah is completely exhausted and that war conditions have made impossible another printing in time for the coming Pesah.

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EDITORIALS

A RAY OF CHEER

THE President's message on Palestine, released on March 9 through Dr. Stephen S. Wise and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, is the first ray of cheer which the Jewish people has enjoyed since the outbreak of the war. President Roosevelt permitted the two Jewish leaders to declare in his name: *"The President authorized us to say that the American Government has never given its approval to the White Paper of* 1939. *The President is happy that the doors of Palestine are today open to Jewish refugees and, when future decisions are reached, full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish national home, for which our Government and the American people have always had the deepest sympathy, and today more than ever, in view of the tragic plight of hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees."* Such a statement would have been welcome at any time. It is doubly welcome now, coming on top of the letter of Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, and the testimony of the Chief of Staff, George C. Marshall, who asked that the Palestine Resolution be temporarily laid aside. Their testimony had given credence to rumors that, because of the Saudi oil deal, the United States was in interest bound to appease the Arabs. Indeed, it was said that the policy of yielding to Arab pressure was dictated by the State Department and even by the White House itself. It is therefore a relief to discover that these fears are groundless and that the appeasement policies are opposed by the President.

The Conference of the American Palestine Committee, though eclipsed by the President's message, was a most momentous gathering. It was attended by nearly eight hundred Christian leaders in religion, labor, education, industry, and government. The meeting was sponsored by leading religious and labor organizations. Unlike former meetings of this body, which were held merely at dinner, the present deliberations lasted an entire day. For the first time a conference was held which impressed the full magnitude of the Jewish tragedy and of the Palestinian program of self-help on the American public.

Friends old and new addressed the gathering. Vice-President Wallace delivered a brief but impassioned plea in behalf of justice to the Jew. Dr. Henry A. Atkinson, chairman of the Christian Council for Palestine, declared he represented one thousand clergymen in demanding that Congress pass the resolution

calling for abrogation of the White Paper. Dr. Walter C. Lowdermilk, Assistant Chief of Soil Conservation of the United States Department of Agriculture, told how the Jews had been a blessing to the Arabs and outlined a program for a Jordan Valley development which would make possible the settlement of four million more persons in Palestine. Other addresses were delivered by Assistant Attorney General Norman N. Littel, Dr. W. F. Albright, Dr. Daniel F. Marsh, president of Boston University, and Daniel A. Poling of the *Christian Herald,* all of whom attacked the White Paper and declared themselves in favor of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Senator Wagner, long a steadfast friend of Zionism, speaking at the dinner, declared that Congressional action was more urgently needed now than in 1922, and Senator Taft spoke in the same spirit. Hon. Paul V. McNutt made a brief but important statement. The entire conference adopted a resolution which, after declaring in favor of a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, stated further: "We urge passage at the earliest opportunity by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Wagner-Taft-Wright-Compton Resolution now under discussion in committee, so that these objectives may be more speedily realized."

Naturally we are sadly disappointed that the Palestine Resolution was temporarily shelved. We believe that such action goes counter to the opinion of enlightened America and is in no way dictated by actual military necessity. We can affirm this, since President Roosevelt did not see any military reasons for withholding his statement. Our disappointment, however, is offset by several considerations.

First of all, the President has spoken. True, his statement may not be as clear or as explicit as many Zionists would wish it were. We should like to know just what is meant by the words, "The President is happy that the doors of Palestine are today open to Jewish refugees." But the announcement authorized by President Roosevelt is distinctly a repudiation of those forces which have been seeking to declare that the Palestine mandate is no affair of the United States and concerns only the British Government. The declaration that the American Government has never given its approval to the White Paper of 1939 clearly represents our government as an interested party in the Palestine situation. The President also makes it perfectly clear that he will see that justice is done the Jews when the Palestine question comes up for consideration. In foreign affairs, the President's words may often carry more weight even than resolutions of Congress. Indeed, some Congressmen believe that the President has virtually taken the matter out of the hands of Congress altogether. Certainly the President has a more direct way of communicating his wishes to the British people than has Congress.

Second, we know that the American people is with us. The voice of America was heard at the American Palestine Conference in complete endorsement of our position, and the sentiment in both houses of Congress is also decidedly friendly to a Jewish Palestine. Even General Marshall is reported not to have opposed the resolution itself but merely its adoption at the present time.

Third, the resolution is only temporarily put aside and has not been dropped. At an auspicious moment it will be taken up again.

We, however, on our part, must continue our agitation. We must make our situation increasingly clear to Christian America, and especially to our Government leaders. We must let them feel how much Palestine means to American Jewry and to what lengths American Jews are

ready to go in order to establish the Jewish homeland. Our enemies are making desperate efforts to defeat our purpose. But we have also powerful friends among men of liberal thought everywhere. They will not let us down, as long as we ourselves are steadfast in our purpose. "We have nothing to fear—but fear itself."

SOME IDOLS OF OUR DAY

THE clergymen who recently issued an appeal to the United Nations to cease bombing German cities were roundly reprimanded in the press, and from the platform of many forums. Military leaders argued that precision bombing had been perfected to the point where only a minimum of civilian destruction was perpetrated. Political observers submitted that Nazi morale was being depleted by the continuous rain of explosives, and that, although the procedure was far from pleasant, it was essential. Others made the point that it was specious to refer to the Germans as "innocent"; were not the boys in the bomber planes even more innocent, and did not some of them also die tragically in the missions over German cities? In this vein ran most of the refutations of the clergymen.

Max Lerner, however, commenting in *PM,* struck a note which seems to us to pierce more deeply to the heart of the issue. He quoted Justice Frankfurter's significant phrase "paralyzing abstractions," and indicated that these "abstractions" were really what had caused the clergymen to misjudge the entire problem. They were appealing in the name of Christian charity, of mercy, of simple decency. That appeal has potency and even a certain cogency, but it is "paralyzing" because its validity is only *limited.* It abstracts a single ethical value out of the context of reality and makes that value an ultimate. There lies the fallacy. To speak of mercy in the midst of a war is to lose sight of the true objectives of that war—which is a greater mercy and love—and even to jeopardize the effective prosecution of that war.

This is not a new fallacy in human thinking. Our ancestors fought against it in their long struggle against idolatry. For them idolatry was the "paralyzing abstraction." Without putting it into the very words, they always implied that idolatry was the error of *mistaking the part for the whole.* The worshipers of Baal were devotees of a false god because they deified the power that made for fertility, as though fertility were the be-all and end-all of life. Elijah's classic stand against the priests of Baal was intended to convey the revolutionary thought that the God who redeemed Israel from bondage was the same God as He who caused the rain to fall. Elijah established the organic relationship between the God of history and the God of nature. Idolatry, on the other hand, severed that relationship, and set up partial goals as ultimate ones.

We should undoubtedly understand better the error of the sincere and well-meaning clergymen if we placed it against the background of that ever-present struggle between true religion and idolatry. These men have, so to speak, made an idol of mercy. It stands alone, unrelated to the other ethical values for which we are fighting, and unrelated even to the ideal of mercy which embraces the whole world. What makes opposition to this viewpoint so difficult is the fact that the idol does indeed represent a value, and not a disvalue in itself. Advocates of vicious and cruel acts are easily refuted. To reject an idol which apparently represents an acceptable ideal often appears like sacrilege.

The fallacy of the partial good, or goal, is evident also in other popular attitudes. For example, the debate over the soldier

vote has been sadly confused by the idol of "states' rights." Now "states rights" is certainly a respectable and valid doctrine. Without its enforcement, the danger of centralization cannot be adequately combated. But there is a value more comprehensive than this, namely, the welfare of the entire nation. This is forgotten by many; it was forgotten, for example, by the editor who recently stated over the radio that we are fighting this war to preserve "states' rights."

In a larger sense, even the welfare of the nation cannot be made into an idol. The classic expression of this truth is contained in the last words of Nurse Cavell, "Patriotism is not enough." No matter how dearly the isolationist may love his country, he is really betraying it when he believes that he can foster its growth and its security without regard for the totality of mankind.

Similarly, the idea of "free enterprise" is idolized. Free enterprise, to be sure, is a bulwark of individual liberty; but it can become an idol to distract Americans from the greater freedoms: freedom from want and freedom from fear. During the early days of the last depression, free enterprise was worshiped at the same altar at which human lives were sacrificed. Bread lines and slums were part of the ritual.

"States' rights," "patriotism," "free enterprise": these are only a few examples of those "halo" words, famous for evoking visions of purity and goodness and equally famous for blinding the eye to the larger truths. The idols of our day are not made of stone or wood; they are made of fallacious ideas which mistake the part for the whole. Therefore man must be more careful than ever to detect them, and must not fail to seek them out even in the churches and synagogues where they are likely to appear, as they always have, in the garb of religion.

THE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION CHANGES ITS NAME

THE Progressive Education Association (PEA) has changed its name to the American Education Fellowship. What has prompted this change? Was it made because the organization under its original name was in disfavor and thought that a new name, indicating a new policy, might be more propitious?

Some newspaper reports imply that practical considerations influenced the change. The Association's income from the Rockefeller General Education Board and from membership is falling. (The Rockefeller Fund is liquidating its assets.) Membership in the Association has dropped by several thousands. Its activities have therefore had to be contracted. Its publication, *Frontiers of Democracy,* a valiant and informative champion of democracy in education and society, has had to be discontinued. The implications are that the Association has suffered this fate because of the accumulated attacks upon it by reactionary forces and vested interests. To overcome this opposition and to regain financial and popular support, it is alleged, the Association has had to change not only its name but also its purposes and emphases from child development to community development. Is this inference correct?

It is true that the Association has lost income and membership, that it has had to contract its activities and to fight reactionary forces, but it is incorrect to imply that it has changed or abandoned the objectives of progressive education. It has simply added emphasis on community development or adult education to that on child development. Any one who has been reading *Social Frontiers* and its successor, *Frontiers of Democracy,* knows that the PEA has been emphasizing for a long time the need for developing, through free and extended education, a

more democratic community life embodying democratic principles in both political and economic institutions.

The PEA was founded in 1919, immediately after World War I, to cope with the developments which followed a crisis in social and educational history. During its period of existence, the Association has succeeded in uncovering for us new knowledge about the learning process. It has set new aims and adopted new methods of teaching. It has, moreover, asserted the natural rights of the child to a happy existence and balanced growth during his school years. But so long as the schools reflected the imperfections of an undemocratic and uninformed adult society, it could not function properly. World War II has accentuated the social and educational crisis and the threat to democracy. The question has thus been raised concerning the role which education must play during the coming reconstruction era in preserving and improving a democratic society. Hence, the desire of progressive educators to extend the horizons and the responsibilities of education.

That these truly progressive and democratic considerations have motivated the change of name is manifested in the official announcement of the Association—"A new program for new times." Speaking of its expanded policies, the Association declares that "education for social reconstruction must take place in progressive-minded schools where children and adults are taught to think for themselves, and where they learn how people may control the social process and institutions to their own interests. Such schools require plentiful resources, excellently trained teachers, good salaries, professional tenure, and democratic school environment. . . . The post-war world will demand a revitalized, expanded and militant association. The career of the PEA militates against yielding to pressure, retreat to a safer or more ambiguous position." The American Education Fellowship succeeds the PEA as the American section of the New Education Fellowship, an international organization of experimental education. Through this Fellowship, it emphasizes "fraternal interdependence of peoples and races, a revolutionary manifestation of the dawning age."

This new Fellowship believes that "whereas the early period of progressive education was marked by strong concern for the interests and capacities of the individual child, and with group activities within the school itself, the period we are now entering needs to be marked by more intimate and fruitful relationship with parents, interest groups, adult education —in short with all aspects of the community which surround the child and the curriculum, and which largely determine whether the schools are to be peoples' schools." Hence, this new Fellowship invites representatives of parent, business, farm, and labor groups.

In accordance with these expanded interests, this Fellowship will strongly oppose reactionary minorities which attack progressive education and are attempting to force our schools back to the 18th century level. It will protect the gains of progressive education and will fight to free the children from "school-masterism." It will seek to enrich the curriculum as an ever growing experience in social learning and living. It will help education to participate in community life and problems (from local to international levels) and to plan a community program for abundance, health and generous opportunity. It will support a democratic world in which the USA is an active member, in which economic and political planning is world wide, and in which free education is made available to all the peoples of the world as a major part of any international program. The change of name from PEA to AEF, and the extension of

emphases as outlined, should therefore be welcomed by all who believe in progressive education and democracy. Thus are progressive American educators preparing to take their part in post-war reconstruction by integrating the school and society, and by utilizing natural resources and democratic principles in both of them.

REALITIES AND VALUES

TEL AVIV IS NO LONGER THE "all-Jewish city" of Palestine. Its municipal boundaries were recently extended and they now include an Arab neighborhood. From the fuss made by Arab politicians and certain American rabbis about the abuse to which non-Jewish minorities might be exposed in a Jewish commonwealth, one would assume serious discrimination against this newly acquired Arab minority. Instead Mayor I. Rokach announced immediately that the Arab citizens would receive full help from the municipality in all municipal affairs and that all official correspondence would be addressed to them in Arabic. Provision was made for Arab representation in the Municipal Council and an Arab was appointed as tax collector. This extension of rights was not grudgingly conceded after the exertion of pressure by the Arabs. It was profered freely and voluntarily by the Jewish authorities. It is therefore just to assume that, when a Jewish Commonwealth is established in Palestine, one of the first legal principles it will enact will be a modern version of a law of the Torah: A minority shall ye not oppress, for ye were a minority in the lands of the Diaspora.

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WE ARE INFORMED IN A J.T.A. dispatch from London that several Polish soldiers in Palestine have been sentenced to prison by British authorities for taking part in anti-Jewish disturbances. It is also reported by a *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow, who was in Iran when large units of Polish troops and civilians arrived there from Russia, that Jewish civilians were segregated in a "ghetto" in the least desirable section of the refugee camp administered by the Polish authorities. Moreover the Poles exerted pressure on the Iraq Government to refuse passage to 500 Polish Jewish refugee children who wished to leave Teheran for Palestine. And yet members of the Polish Jewish labor party known as the *Bund,* nationalist Jews but not Zionists, joined with the American Council for Judaism in urging our Congress not to pass the resolution for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Their reason was, as directly quoted in the *Jewish Morning Journal* of March 12, that "the Jewish masses can find the solution of their problem only in the opportunity of rebuilding their old homes on foundations of justice . . . only a world built on principles of economic equality and freedom will be able to guarantee Jews in the lands of their residence a positive solution of their problem as human beings and citizens, and as a national minority." If our Jewish Bundists are willing to take their chances on living as a minority among the Poles, they are welcome to try. But why should those Jews who have no confidence in a sudden change of heart on the part of the Polish majority be denied the right to settle in Palestine and establish a Jewish commonwealth there? Would non-Jewish minorities be less secure in a Jewish state than the Jewish minority would be in a Polish state?

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TWENTY THOUSAND ADDITIONAL Jews may still enter Palestine "legally," even under the restrictions of the White Paper, the legality of which has been challenged by the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, by Prime Minister Churchill, and, most recently, by Presi-

dent Roosevelt. But 1,400 Jewish refugees are still interned on the British island of Mauritius for attempting to enter Palestine "illegally." Their only crime was fleeing from imminent death to their national home, the only country on which they had a claim. Their appeal to be admitted among the 20,000 has been rejected. They have proclaimed a day of fasting and cessation from work in protest against this injustice. "Why are these unfortunate people still subjected to such unnecessary excessive punishment and deprived of all hope for the future?" asks *Davar,* a leading Hebrew newspaper of Palestine. President Roosevelt has expressed his gratification that Jews are even now being admitted to Palestine; we wonder how he would answer *Davar's* question, how Churchill would answer it.

▼

THE WORLD IS BEGINNING TO recognize the unique and amazing achievements of Henrietta Szold. Boston University has just conferred upon her the degree of Doctor of Humanities, calling her "a mother in Israel who through organizing and directing the Youth Aliyah has become a joyful mother of ten thousand motherless children." The conferring of the degree was marked by a two-way broadcast from Boston and Jerusalem. Dr. Daniel Marsh, president of Boston University, is to be congratulated upon his fine understanding in having selected Miss Szold for this honor. But we confess that we shall not be satisfied until some high recognition comes to Miss Szold on an international scale. She ranks with the heroines of all times.

THE CENSORS IN PALESTINE recently held up publication of President Roosevelt's statement to which we refer in our editorial, "A Ray of Cheer." According to reports, they went so far as to delete passages from a speech by Churchill in which he praised the contributions of Palestine Jews to the war effort. Of course, the efforts of the British censors were futile. The Egyptian newspapers carried the stories, and when these arrived in Palestine the news was out. But the effort was made. It is a significant commentary upon the attitudes of the local administrators to the true nature of Britain's function in Palstine. The local officials are seemingly intent upon destroying any possible chances for Jewish development, and equally intent upon inciting hatred among the Arabs against the Jews. If the statesmen of the United Nations want to know the truth about Arab-Jewish relations, the place *not* to go to is the offices of the Palestine administration.

BILLS IN CONGRESS WORTHY OF SUPPORT

HR 1995. A civil rights law for the Nation's Capital. Introduced by Congressman Rowan. Referred to Judiciary Committee. Urge your Congressman to sign discharge petition and to vote for bill.

S. Res. 132. Discrimination in the armed forces. Bill calls for seven-man commission to investigate. Urge Senate Military Affairs Committee to hold hearings.

M. R. K.

The Legal Rehabilitation of European Jews *

By MAX M. LASERSON

IT is really very difficult to speak at present about the legal rehabilitation of Jews in Europe. To the most dreadful medieval persecution by torture, murder pogrom, and segregation a new "system" has been added in our day—systematic starvation carried out with a scientifically calculated thoroughness (*Gruendlichkeit*). That is the contribution of a nation which, in the past, we regarded as a source of enlightenment. After 200 years of development, Germany has been led from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason to Hitler's Critique of Pure Blood.

On January, 1942, Hitler stated before the Reichstag:

"We know full well that the war can end only with the extermination of the German people or the disappearance of Jewry from Europe."

With a special innuendo directed against Anglo-Saxon peoples, the SS. leader, Karl Best, declared on July 27, 1942:

"The Jewish question is the dynamite with which we shall blow up the redoubts where the last snipers of liberalism have dug themselves in. Nations who abandon their Jews, thereby give up their previous judaized form of life, based on false ideals of freedom."

As a result, more than three-fourths of the Jews of Axis-held Europe have been either uprooted or have perished. At least 1,500,000 Jews are known to have perished between September, 1939 and July, 1942. And the last remnants of the old Polish Jewry were doomed in the Warsaw ghetto in their gallant but hopeless struggle against the German brutes. Nevertheless we still discuss the future of European Jews, because American Jews are today the natural trustees of their European brethren.

Those who remember the early years of the period between the two World Wars and the difficulties encountered in the attempt to restore normal conditions will recall that the hopes of Europe were even then connected with the West in general and with the United States in particular. This was the first time in history that the tired and outworn Old World turned to America and received from her military help, relief and even the principles and doctrine of the famous Fourteen Points.

And what was true for Gentiles was true for Jews—perhaps even to a higher degree. Ecclesiastes says: "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." European Jewry had sent out its brethren upon the waters of the Atlantic and after a long time it has again found them. True, for a while, they remained a kind of lost Jewish tribe, not much regarded by the Jewry of the Old World, which continued to go in its own folkways, to follow ancient traditions, without paying much attention to the daring, adventurous pioneers. But in time the adventure turned into an Advent, into a renaissance which renewed the very being of World Jewry. American Jewry is called upon to repeat its role of 1919 now, after a quarter of a century, in a much more comprehensive and thorough way and under worse conditions.

A Tendency to Be Avoided

There is one dangerous tendency which we must avoid in dealing with the prob-

*From a symposium on "Jewish Peace Aims and the Post-War World" conducted by the New York Zionist Society, on May 23, 1943.

lem of rehabilitation. That is the tendency to stress the individual as the most important consideration if not the only one. We must be warned against the neglect of collective rights. A real rehabilitation is unthinkable without a synthesis of both the individualist and the collectivist attitudes.

Under the pressure of ten years of the Hitler regime a trend has developed among its opponents to seek equal rights for the individual at the expense of the rights of the community. To be sure, during the last ten years, the Jews of Europe have lost not only the rights which were granted them as men and citizens by constitutions and treaties, but even the most elementary safeguards for the protection of life. The rehabilitation of these rights is therefore indispensable. But this does not mean that the collective rights, which should be made the cornerstone of Jewish community life, may be neglected. Jews cannot exist as isolated atoms. Here as everywhere, exaggerated imitation or adaptation can only cause harm. When serious non-Jewish political thinkers consider the Atlantic Charter or other international Bills of Rights, they do not forget that besides the rights of the individual, there are rights which ought to be accorded to peoples, communities or groups.* But our own followers of the Bill of Rights are ready to give up our collective rights entirely or to reduce them to a negligible minimum. They try to reverse an old Jewish proverb based upon the experience of some two thousand years of the *galut*. Instead of saying "Whatever happens to Klal Yisroel will happen to Reb Yisroel," they say, in effect, "Whatever happens to Reb Yisroel will happen to Klal Yisroel."

This contradistinction is an old one. It received particular emphasis in Europe during the debates in the French Constituent Assembly of 1789, when Clermont-Tournere declared: "To the Jews as a nation—no rights whatsoever; to the Jews as citizens and individuals all rights." In the decision of the so-called Napoleonic Sanhedrin of 1807, this was solemnly accepted by the Jews and established by the State. Nevertheless, Jewish collective life did not disappear. After this Second World War, the proper synthesis of individual and collective rights will have to be found.

The Changed Situation Since World War I

In considering the question of the legal rehabilitation of European Jewry, it must be borne in mind that during the 19th century civil rights and legal equality were granted to Jews nowhere in Europe, except in Western countries where Jews were legally and politically emancipated. The differences between the progressive West and the backward East served as the basis for the first international intervention in behalf of Jewish rights. The most important precedents were set by the Treaties of Vienna in 1814-1815, the Protocol of Constantinople of 1856 (regarding Jews of Moldavia and Valachia), and the recognition of the independence of Rumania and Serbia in 1878.

In 1919 neither the victorious democratic Allies nor the defeated Central Powers, headed by Germany, denied to Jews civil rights and equality, and even, at least in Central and Eastern Europe, a certain minimum of minority group rights. The granting of such rights to Jews and other minorities may, with a degree of truth, be said to have served as the common denominator of the ethical and legal consciousness of European nations.

This took place in the following stages: (1) The five minority treaties with Po-

*See Quincy Wright, *Human Rights and the World Order.*

land, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Greece; (2) special chapters devoted to minorities in Peace Treaties with Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey, and (3) special declarations made before the Council of the League of Nations, binding Albania, the three Baltic States, Finland and Iraq. The German-Polish Convention on Upper Silesia belongs to the same category of diplomatic acts.

The situation is entirely different during the present war, and will continue to be after it is over. Since 1933, no common approach on legal prerequisites can be reached. The Axis powers, with Germany as the leading state, are expressly against the entire conception and practice of civil rights or equality. Moreover, inequality and the withdrawal of civil rights from Jews and other minorities are among the avowed war-aims of the Axis. The physical annihilation of Jews and other minorities throughout Europe by direct action or by starvation is a frankly admitted purpose. The conception of the "master race" and *Lebensraum,* which acknowledges no territorial limitations and disregards all borders, not only denies civil rights—including "the protection of life" mentioned in the minority treaties of 1919-1920—but replaces the legitimate rights of a German minority by the status of a ruling class over a numerical majority of foreign or "inferior" peoples.

Under these circumstances the restoration or the establishment of civil rights and equality for Jews and other minorities must be one of the basic peace aims. However, it cannot be formulated as a mere legal restoration to a status which existed previously. It should be incorporated in the fundamental principles of a future international regime. Certain principles, based on the experience of the years 1919-1939, have to be taken into consideration before a detailed catalogue of rights can be enacted.

Fundamental Prerequisites

The following are prerequisities for any legal rehabilitation:

1. *The recognition of the rights of man and civil rights are to be not only leading constitutional principles, but they must be enforcible by courts.*

Every individual as a man and citizen is to have equal rights, regardless of birth, nationality, language, race or religion. This principle was recognized by the minority treaties of 1919-1920 and subsequently by the states affected. In most cases, clauses affirming these rights were introduced into the body of the constitutions of European states according to the minority treaties of 1919-1920. They thus became fundamental law. Most typical is Article 1 of the Polish minority treaty which contains the following provision: "No law, regulation or official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation or official action prevail over them." The future peace arrangements have to be based on the liberal principles of the constitutions of the past, but must reckon with the problem of enforcing them.

The legal recognition of some "constitutional" fundamental rights or liberties does not necessarily mean that they will be put into effect. This is especially true of Europe, where constitutional law is only to a very small degree made enforcible by the usual standards and methods of judicial procedure. The citizen who belongs to a minority is much more interested in the judicial enforcibility of his rights than the citizen who belongs to a majority. Therefore, future international legislation should establish a special judicial procedure for enforcing fundamental human rights.

2. *Human rights and civil rights (including equality) must have priority over other minority rights in the strict sense of the term.*

In the practice of some multi-national

states, bound by the international obligations mentioned above, we can often note a relative observance of minority and international rights combined with the non-observance of constitutionally guaranteed civil rights. There were countries where Jewish communities were recognized, or where Jewish school systems were included in the general network of public elementary and high schools, and where even a partial autonomy was granted. But, at the same time, Jews were not given the same treatment as the citizens of the dominant majorities, particularly in matters pertaining to the admission to civil service, public employment and honors, the practice of professions and industry. What we observed in those countries was a partial concession to the need for collective or national rights compenstated by a denial of individual rights to members of minority groups. It is therefore obvious that collective minority rights are not to be established prior to a full enactment of an enforcible bill of rights.

3. *Equality of rights does not mean equality only before the law and courts. It also includes equality of opportunity—equal participation in matters of social security, economic activity and the exercise of professions.*

The formal equality of rights has a rather negative character. It excludes all kinds of anti-Jewish legislation or restrictions. But a full equality goes further; it has positive content and asks equal treatment in cases where citizens of different racial, religious or linguistic minorities appear in the capacity of claimants for benefits or candidates for positions. No overt or covert discrimination is permissable.

In the post-war period, a series of social services will have to be established, which will neither represent public bodies and governmental institutions nor conform to the lines of traditional private law. All these institutions or agencies of a social-economic character (e.g., all kinds of cooperatives) likewise shall be required to observe the principle of full equality in employment, etc., and in the treatment of the beneficiaries: consumers, producers, etc.

Equality, both formal and positive, has to be carried out and controlled by administrative organs and social and economic agencies, subject to the supreme control of the courts.

Protecting Collective Rights

Even in the event of a perfect implementation of "bills of rights" there is the serious danger that European Jewries will become entirely "atomized" and a process of rapid assimilation and decline will ensue, unless other precautions are also taken. If they are not, we may well find that we have forfeited the achievements of the period 1919-1939 with its developed Jewish communities, each having its elementary and high schools, and its system of taxation and representation.

It is strange to observe how little we have learned from the long history of the Jewish Diaspora. That history would have been unthinkable without Jewish communities which were the first and most necessary incarnation of our collective life and rights. The abstraction of a purely individual, atomized Jew has at all times been but a juridical phantom. Apparently, we have not even learned anything from the immediate impact of recent events, of events that have occurred since the First World War.

The Permanent Court of International Justice, which is certainly very far from meeting Jewish needs and problems, was nevertheless more realistic in its advisory opinions on equality of rights and on the relations between majorities and minorities than are those Jews who make a fetich of legal formulas. The Court stated concerning formal legal equality:

"The fact that no social discrimination appears in the text of the law . . . makes no substantial difference. . . . There must be equality in fact as well as ostensible legal equality in the sense of the absence of discrimination in the words of the law."

And in connection with the Greek minority schools in Albania, the same Court defined the aim of the laws protecting minorities in the following terms:

"The idea underlying the treaties for the protection of minorities is to secure for certain elements . . . the possibility of living peaceably alongside that population (the majority) . . . while at the same time preserving the characteristics which distinguish them from the majority . . . there would be no true equality between a majority and a minority, if the latter were deprived of its own institutions and were consequently compelled to renounce that which constitutes the very essence of its being as a minority."

This argumentation of the World Court makes equally necessary both kinds of rights: those of the "atomized" individuals as well as those pertaining to the minorities as collective entities.

And here as elsewhere political problems cannot be resolved solely by economics. The improvement of the economic situation of the masses does not in itself offer any assurance for the development of a free Jewish national movement in the Diaspora. . . . Nor is that only a problem from the viewpoint of the so-called *"Galut* Nationalism." Soviet Russia is the best proof that economic improvement or social achievements are in themselves no sufficient guarantee for a development of national self-determination. New Europe, even given guarantees for free political propaganda and press, will not show much better results than Soviet Russia. There and here the danger of the full assimilation and disappearance of a collective Jewry is imminent.

It has now become the mode in certain circles, especially in America, to combine negation of the *galut* with maximalist demands for Palestine. The argument runs as follows: the less we have to care for guarantees of Jewish group rights in the Diaspora the more we can emphasize our claims for a political renaissance in Palestine. The authors of this argumentation, however, forget that Zionism is rooted also in the Diaspora. A complete assimilation in the Diaspora means—in the last analysis—the cutting away from Zionism of its most vital links with World Jewry.

We cannot speak today about an exact geographical division of Jewry in its relation to minority rights. In the period of 1919-1939 we had certain geographic demarcations of Jewish minority rights which more or less coincided with the belt of countries bound by minority treaties or obligations. This belt reached from the Gulf of Finland down to the Near East. It covered the three Baltic States, Poland, Rumania, and countries of the Balkans. Some Central European states like Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria and Yugoslavia were also included. But the Jews of Austria, for instance, did not make practical use of the Minorities Treaty of St. Germain as did the Polish Jews in relation to the Minorities Treaty concluded by their country. This belt between Soviet Russia and Western Europe practically covered the parts of European Jewry which were most important psychologically and numerically.

Eastern Jewry was not only most vitally concerned with collective minority rights but was even fortunate enough to be granted them. The second group were Jews of Central Europe which, as has been shown, made little practical use of minority rights. Most inimical to the concept of a national collective status were the Jews in the "peripheries": France, Italy and the Scandinavian States. These "geographical" borders of European Jewry will be shifted after the present war as a result of nazified anti-Jewish legislation and government. It

would be impossible to reconstruct Jewish minority rights after the present war according to these territorial divisions. The terrible experience of Jewish persecution, deportation and extermination may have unpredictable consequences; some groups which, until 1939, were internally assimilated, may very well be brought closer or *vice versa.* It is therefore necessary to reject geographical division, although some regional features will still retain certain significance.

The division has to follow some general political and legal standards of the respective countries. In countries of traditional Western liberalism and democracy, minority rights may develop more freely without fixed legislation. In those countries, which were in recent years torn by feverish changes of regimes, greater demands for detailed legislation and guarantees of enforcement will be required. Therefore the division would have to be made rather according to these standards than according to the previous classification of (a) Eastern countries with national minorities, and (b) Western countries where minority rights are not recognized by public law, although the countries themselves were populated by some minorities struggling to attain those rights.

The Jewish minority status may be legally enacted along the same lines as in 1919-1939, *that is by beginning with a regime of the recognition and partial support (state, municipal, etc.) of self-determination and finishing with full-fledged autonomy.* It will have to be left to local Jewries to decide what kind of self-determination, if any, will be the most feasible for them or what form or combination of forms (religious, secularist, linguistic) they themselves would prefer. In this regard consideration will have to be given to world-wide, national and municipal Jewish community needs.

The Parable of the Three Rings

By LEO TREPP

IN 1729 two men were born whose influence upon Jewry has been profound—Lessing and Mendelssohn. Lessing wrote "Nathan the Wise," with its great appeal for mutual understanding, and Moses Mendelssohn was the model after which Nathan was fashioned. Today, the celebration of their 215th birthdays, suggests an inquiry into the effect their ideas have had on Jewish thought. That it has been profound, we know, but has it always been healthy?

It is easy to understand why Lessing and Mendelssohn exerted so great an influence on Jewry. They were the first great personalities whom the Jews encountered when they emerged from the intellectual and cultural ghetto in which they had lived. Mendelssohn, as a matter of fact, was the Moses of his time, leading Jewry out of its confinement into the broad realm of contemporary civilization, straight into the period of Enlightenment (*Aufklaerungsperiode*). It was this *Aufklaerung* with its trend to humanism which had made the Emancipation possible, and since it was the first philosophy with which the German Jews came into contact, they were especially indebted to the philosophers of this school, and deeply influenced by them. The philosophy of Enlightenment continued to shape Jewish thinking long after it had been discarded by non-Jewish thinkers.

Lessing's Parable of the Three Rings

The spirit of the period is well expressed by the well-known story of the three rings in Lessing's "Nathan the Wise." But few thinkers were tolerant enough, even in that period, to make its idea their own as Lessing had done. In the play the story is told by Nathan, in response to the Sultan's question, which of the three great religions, Christianity, Islam or Judaism, he considered to be the true one. It runs as follows:

A father once had a precious heirloom, a ring with magic powers. It was to be given always to the most beloved son. But this father, having three sons whom he loved with equal devotion, had two other rings made, which looked exactly like the genuine one, and gave one ring to each of the sons. From that time on, no one knows whose ring is the true one. Only time can tell. He who proves himself to be the greatest in spirit and in love may consider himself the owner of the true ring. And this is the story of the three religions. They shall be judged by their works. None is ostensibly superior to the others; its believers hold on to it because they have inherited it, although knowing that theirs may be the wrong ring. It is humanism which counts first and last.

This parable is one of the finest in literature. It preaches tolerance, equality, and mutual understanding. It invites the faithful of all religions to compete with one another in love and good works. No religion shall have the right to force its own brand of faith on any other group or to despise those who worship God in different ways. Thus the story, which we already find in medieval Jewish literature, has an important and lasting message. But in Lessing's setting, as the central theme of the play, and the solution of the problem of religion, it acquires an additional meaning. It bids the believers themselves to bear in mind that their religion need not necessarily be the true one. That is how a great many Jews have understood the parable, particularly in the 19th century. But, understood in this way, it may do a great deal of harm.

Lessing and the "Education of the Human Race"

Lessing's own philosophy does not follow through the idea contained in this Jewish interpretation of the story. He once wrote a pamphlet entitled: "The Education of the Human Race." In it he explains that human reason and intelligence will lead humanity toward God. There is no need for any revelation. Yet revelation has a great advantage. It foretells the issue. Just as a teacher may give his pupil the solution of a mathematical problem and then put him to the task of figuring out how to arrive at the solution, so God gave mankind the conclusions to which reason will lead only after a long struggle. And mankind, in the course of its development, may yet make use of its knowledge of the final outcome and benefit by it. This implies that certain revealed principles have to be accepted without question, but with the knowledge that, in the end, our own reason will show us their underlying purpose.

In connection wth this idea, Lessing explains that the Old Testament had some truth to teach which led beyond anything to which reason had arrived, and the New Testament has some revealed truths, which again lead beyond anything either taught by the Old Testament or arrived at by reason.

Thus it becomes clear, that, from Lessing's standpoint, those who do not believe in the New Testament are at a disadvantage. Their reasoning will lead them to the revealed truth of the New Testament only after a long struggle. This may not be considered a preference for Christianity from an ethical point of

view, but it shows the preference at least from a utilitarian point of view in that the teachings of the New Testament may be put to good use by the Christians immediately. Thus, in a way, this doctrine stands in contrast to the spirit of the parable.

Lessing's theories, even those voiced in his "Education," were not accepted, however, in German Protestantism. As for German Jewry, it seems to have overlooked the *Christian* implications of these theories, which in other respects were closely akin to those expressed by Maimonides long before Lessing.

Thus German Judaism prepared itself for its role of partner in the work of world-education, prepared itself to do its share for humanity in the spirit of the prophetic teachings, which seemed to have been revived generally in the days of the Emancipation. Protestantism, however, withdrew into its shell. Jews neglected their own Jewish spiritual development, weakened themselves spiritually, but there was very little response from the other side. Thus, that Jewish philosophy which was based on the principle of mutual cooperation of the various groups hung in the void. This has had a profound influence on Jewish life.

The Fallacy in Lessing's Parable and Mendelssohn's Dilemma

The fallacy in Lessing's parable becomes evident, if we compare it with the Jewish principle as formulated by the rabbis. The rabbis state: *"Tzadike ummot haolam yesh lahem helek leolam haba,"* "The righteous of all nations (and religions) will find salvation." Thus it is made unmistakably clear that salvation does not depend on the validity of one *specific* religion, but on the believer's implicit faith in whatever religion is *his*. Theoretically all religions equally may be valuable or useless; actually it is the psychological reaction of the faithful to their religion which counts. Psychologically there can and must be only one true religion for the believer, namely *his* religion. Lessing's ring-idea becomes religious suicide. For if even the faithful may doubt whether their religion is a true one, then religion itself becomes irrelevant and useless. It is deplorable that a great many Jews have become victims of the fallacy in Lessing's ring-idea, forgetting that Judaism is the only religion *for us* and deserves our attention first and last, for it is only through it that we make our Jewish contribution to world improvement.

The first Jew to come into intimate contact with Lessing's idea was the first to experience the difficulty of the situation. It was Mendelssohn himself. He believed in Lessing's principle of "Education through reason"; he believed in *Aufklaerung,* but he vitally believed in Judaism as well. He tried to evade the issue by stating that Judaism was merely revealed law, not revealed doctrine, and thus did not affect our thought or reason, but left the intellect entirely free. In doing so, Mendelssohn thereby deprived Judaism of its character of "religion." But later on he was actually put to the test. Lavater, a Swiss clergyman, challenged him, either to prove the superiority of Judaism or to give it up. And then Mendelssohn (unconsciously) reverted to the position of the rabbis. Judaism, he declared, was the only true religion *for him.* But with this statement he moved away entirely from the implications of the ring-story.

Historical Consequences

Among Mendelssohn's followers, Lessing's parable was taken at its face value. It doubtless contributed to the wave of conversions to Christianity which swept the Jewish upper classes shortly after the Emancipation. These Jews saw that society would be open to them after their

conversion, that they would be able to forge ahead. They were, moreover, able to interpret Judaism in the light of Lessing's parable which implied that it was not necessarily better than any other religion, *even for them.* They thus inferred that it might as well be abandoned. For according to Lessing, the principles of Judaism would be retained in any event, for they were steps on the way of reason. What these Jews thought they were giving up was merely the laws, which, according to Mendelssohn, were the only distinctive feature of Judaism. Having abandoned some of the laws already, there was no longer any reason for them to call themselves Jews. Thus they believed. And they were convinced that spiritually they gave up nothing while materially they gained a great deal.

An actual event clearly demonstrates this trend of mind. In 1799 David Friedlander, a leading Jew in Berlin, wrote to a well known and influential clergyman in Berlin who was famous as a liberal Protestant, the Rev. Teller. In his letter Friedlander said that a number of men like himself together with their families would be willing to give up "the religion of the fathers and ceremonial laws, and choose the great Protestant society as a refuge . . . *if this could be done without abandonment of their reason and without harm to their moral feelings.*" This simply meant that these men made a bid for a religion of reason and were willing to sacrifice everything. In return they demanded only that they should not be obliged to accept dogmas which were not acceptable to reason, including, of course, the belief that baptism was necessary for salvation. The letter clearly tends to show how deeply Lessing's and Mendelssohn's theories had influenced these Jews. And the answer clearly shows the stand taken by even the liberal Protestant church. The answer was *No.*

Nevertheless, Jewish philosophers of the 19th century never gave up their optimism, although their stand forced them again and again to explain their adherence to Judaism and their belief in the validity of Judaism for Jews.

This optimistic philosophy greatly weakened the Jewish people at a time when Jewry needed leadership. For, after the Emancipation, Jews moved in a new world spiritually, intellectually and physically. They had to get adjusted to a new life. In the ghetto they had been protected by the group; now they stood alone. They had to cope with new forms of social, economic and ideological anti-Semitism. Their thinkers, however, did nothing to keep them together. On the contrary, they pushed the individual into a foreign and often hostile world and left him to his own devices.

This indeed was the most tragic consequence of Lessing's ring-idea and Mendelssohn's interpretation of Judaism. We have not yet recovered from it. For the renaissance of Judaism has come through Zionism, a political national movement, and not through spiritual regeneration. As long as spiritual re-orientation is not achieved, the Jewish renaissance will remain incomplete.

Christian and Jewish Liberalism

Jewish optimism was not justified, as the events have shown. Romanticism in Germany brought a complete reversal of thought. A reaction against liberation set in. But even the liberal church has a viewpoint which is different from the Jewish.

The "optimism" of the liberal church is based on the principle that the world will move towards its final goal automatically. This is a thesis based on ideas similar to those expressed by Lessing, but drawn mainly from Leibnitz and Hegel. Leibnitz represents the idea that there is a pre-established harmony in the world, which is moving uphill, that evil is but

the backdrop which makes the good shine so much brighter, and that evil is therefore a part of the great harmony. But Leibnitz, too, speaks of Christianity as the highest form of religion. Judaism to him is monotheism without the principle of immortality. Christianity, however, transformed the religion of the philosopher into one of the people. For Hegel, Christianity is the great synthesis of the Spirit. Thus though liberal Christianity may become altogether philosophical, it still remains Christianity, since the Christian idea is part of the system of those liberal thinkers upon which Christian liberal philosophy is based. Judaism, in accepting these philosophies indiscriminately, would acknowledge its own inferiority as compared with Christianity and thus become indeed a mere auxiliary religion. It could not remain self-sustaining and vital.

This principle does not merely affect the philosophy of Judaism, it deeply affects our lives. We are bound to Christian culture and cannot escape it. We have no desire to escape it, for we have been and are profiting by it. Christian culture and civilization permeate our lives. Thus even the agnostic and atheist who has separated himself from a Christian church will never be able to escape Christianity, for his life is bound up with it. The Jewish agnostic and atheist and liberal not only separates himself from historic Judaism but actually takes a step in the direction of Christianity.

Therefore liberal Judaism faces a danger which can be avoided only if its liberal philosophy is not merely a liberalization of Jewish law and dogma but a positive edifice of Jewish thought which is liberal. And against the impact of Christian culture on our lives we have to preserve our own Jewish identity by stressing Judaism as a culture and civilization in its own right.

This is not a refutation of the story of the three rings and its teachings of love, tolerance, understanding and cooperation. It is merely the interpretation of this idea in the spirit of the rabbis. It does not invoke self-seclusion, but common cooperation and reciprocity.

The Lot-Complex

The Jewish trend towards self-negation is apparently quite old, for it seems to have led to the inclusion of the Lot-story in the Bible. Lot and David Friedlander are identical characters. The biblical Abraham is willing to cooperate, and makes a covenant with the ruler of the land in which he lives, yet he first erects his altar. But Lot is willing to sacrifice his heritage for his misunderstood mission. Rabbinical interpretation makes him a judge of the Sodomites. But his missionary zeal leads to no result other than his own destruction, while Abraham retains the friendship and respect of the people among whom he lives and even exerts an influence on them.

The Lot-complex—perhaps a misunderstood prophetical thought—thus seems to be genuinely Jewish. To deny that it sometimes may have its roots in noble and sincere thought would do it an injustice. But it will always remain a sign of spiritual weakness.

On reading the excerpts of Sermons, such as those delivered in New York, and reported in the *Times*, one cannot help but find evidence of this complex. The Christian ministers, in the main, preach Christ; the rabbis analyze political events from a general humanistic standpoint, and only rarely do we find an excerpt that tells of a sermon, preaching "Judaism." It must be admitted that the impression gained from the outside is deceptive. A sermon can hardly be judged by the excerpts quoted in the papers. But it is evident that somewhere on the line from preacher to congregation to paper and general (Jewish) public there is someone who wants this kind of address

or believes in its effectiveness. This fact may therefore serve as one of many possible examples of the Lot-complex as it is still manifest in our days.

Is Zionism the Whole Answer?

Zionism has brought a revival of Judaism in recent decades. It has made possible the re-establishment of a Jewish culture on Jewish soil. It will have a regenerating effect on Israel as a whole. But, as has been shown in THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST (Palestinian Educators in Search of Religion, by Mordecai M. Kaplan, Vol. IX, No. 11), the chances are slim that Palestine will develop religious leadership. Yet without religion the Lot-complex cannot be overcome. A Zionist Palestine which is not *wholly* (and that means in religion too) a Jewish Palestine is merely the projection of the Lot-principle into group-life—"Let us be like other nations."

This is not intended to detract from the great and heroic achievement of Zionism and the *yishuv*. It means, however, to affirm that while we, Jews in the Diaspora, need the principle of a national civilization in addition to religion, the *yishuv* will need the religious principle in addition to nationalism to complete Jewish living. If this can be achieved, both Diaspora Jewry and the Jewry of Palestine will be able to make a truly worthwhile contribution to world civilization.

Only when we perceive the limitation of the story of the three rings shall we be able to make our maximum contribution to the spirit of universal brotherhood which it proclaims.

Music Notes

By JUDITH K. EISENSTEIN

AT monthly meetings of the Jewish Music Forum it is customary to have a reading of new compositions, which are presented by the composer and then discussed by the hearers. The meeting which was held this week was devoted in part to a presentation by Leonard Bernstein of his symphonic score, "Jeremiah." This was a rare opportunity not only to become acquainted with a new work before hearing it performed by an orchestra, but to learn at first hand something of the impulses which caused its creation.

The customary scholarly solemnity of the Forum gathering in the lounge of the 92nd Street Y.M.H.A. was mitigated by the presence of a number of eager and interested youngsters who had wandered in. But even the worthy elders of Jewish music were obliged to relax before the easy casual youthfulness of the composer. And before long, his pleasant appearance, his self-deprecatory little grin, and his informal speech tinged with Bostonese had quite conquered the small audience.

He told how he had come to compose the symphony. Roughly, he spoke of discarding two earlier short works which he said were "lousy," but which contained some thematic material that he liked. He decided at long last to yield to a bug he had for Jeremiah. He'd got the bug when he was a kid; the book of Jeremiah had always excited him. That is, in Hebrew. He never cared much about the English translation. Something about the very juxtaposition of sounds in the Hebrew was very rich and beautiful. He got to work on this symphony, and some of the

thematic material he had liked found its way into it.

The symphony, said Mr. Bernstein, is not programmatic, like a tone poem by Liszt or Strauss. It merely tries to parallel certain strains in the writings of the prophet. People say it sounds very Jewish. He doesn't know exactly why. Mood, probably. It is not derived from Jewish melody, as a whole. However, certain germs of Jewish melody serve as basic material. The first movement, a slow one, is called "Prophecy." It is built up largely on a motif of three tones, the tones of the "Amen" in the liturgy of the Three Festivals. Pesah, isn't it, said Mr. Bernstein, when we sing "A-a-men" (on your piano, G-D-C). The second movement is called "Profanation." It is intended to parallel the descriptions in Jeremiah, of the corruption and evil which is bringing on the destruction of Judah. It is a furiously fast movement, with exciting rhythmic patterns, based on the Haftarah chant. The third movement, called "Lamentation" introduces the additional element of a mezzo-soprano solo to the score. The text for this solo consists of verses from various parts of the Book of Lamentations. Melodically it contains fragments of the chant of *Ekhah* which Mr. Bernstein said he remembered hearing many times, on Tisha B'av. Principally, he used the cadence of the chant, (again, on your piano, G F E D, A D C B A).

After this introduction, the composer proceeded to give a masterly reading of the highly complicated score at the piano. Where his ten fingers were simply not enough, he sang "pom pom pom" and invited someone nearby to play the bass part. In the last movement he sang the solo part (the text is in Hebrew, incidentally.) All of us who could possibly crowd around the piano to follow the score did so. This writer stood on tiptoe, craning her neck to see at least the blocking out of the orchestration on the page. The first movement was interesting. The second movement was breathtaking. Here was the Haftarah chant, unmistakably. Just such a tune did Mr. Bernstein learn when he was preparing to become Bar Mitzvah. No arid research, no scholarly precision, but warm, vibrating intimacy gave birth to this treatment. It is as though the tune, part of the boy's life since childhood, had grown and gained a violent life of its own. Again and again it is hurled forth in fragments, faster and faster, from one instrument to another, from different voices at the same time in wild counterpoint, rising high and yet higher, to a tremendous climax.

The lyrical beauty of the third movement was relief. It is a truly emotional and stirring piece, with a voice part that really sings. We could imagine the effectiveness of the words rising out of the massed sounds of the orchestra, and we could feel that the song went on, even where the voice stopped and the instruments carried on alone.

It was a beautiful and a stimulating experience. We were obliged to leave before the discussion, but were glad to retain the untouched impression, which we carried along with us to the "speech" end of a dinner in honor of the dedication of the new building of the Herzliah Hebrew Academy. There, as one speaker after another stressed the importance, the value, the creative potentiality of a thorough Hebraic education, this listener sat nodding in strenuous agreement. In fact, we had to control an overpowering urge to rise and shout, "Listen to them, you people. It's the truth they're telling you. It isn't just theory,—it isn't just idealistic dreaming, it's the truth, and we can prove it. Our great Hebrew heritage is alive. When it is planted in soil,—good honest soil of a land,—or good honest human soil, it takes root again and flowers."

Discussion in Theology

THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS VOCATION

By EUGENE KOHN

AMONG theological questions the discussion of which arouses strong emotional reactions is the question of the validity of the doctrine of Israel as the "Chosen People." Attempts to eliminate or revise references to that doctrine in our liturgy usually meet with considerable oppositon. In the controversies between Zionists and anti-Zionists, the question of the "mission of Israel" has similarly played a prominent part. Evidently the notion that the Jewish people has a unique and divinely appointed role to play in human history, a special religious vocation, has a strong hold on the religious sentiment of Jews. It should therefore be of some importance to clarify what we mean by the vocation of Israel and to understand the place which this doctrine must occupy in our religious thinking and living.

There has never been a time in the history of our people in which belief in the religious vocation of Israel did not play a part. But that belief has, in different eras and under different circumstances, expressed itself in various forms. Belief that Israel was "chosen" from among all other nations for special blessing and salvation is one of the ways in which the vocation of Israel has been conceived; the theory of Israel's mission to teach ethical monotheism to mankind is another; the doctrine of the "covenant" is a third; the theocratic conception of Israel as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" is a fourth, etc. It is possible, therefore, to reject some of the forms in which the idea of a religious vocation has expressed itself without abandoning the idea itself; that remains valid for us so long as we retain a religious outlook on Jewish life.

For our day, the conception that God chose Israel from among the nations as the special vehicle of His salvation cannot be regarded as a satisfactory version of Israel's vocation. If it is held merely as an attempt to explain the superiority of Jewish religion in the past over other religions that were contemporaneous with that past, it has no value as a guide or incentive for present-day Jewish living. If, on the other hand, it is given implications for the future and suggests a necessary and inherent superiority of Jewish religion over all others, or of Jewish civilization as a whole over all other civilizations, it should be rejected as undemocratic and intolerant. No individual and no group is qualified to pass judgment on its own superiority over any other. Two Jewish legal maxims cover the case. One says: *"Karov pasul le-edut"* ("A kinsman is disqualified as a witness"); the other, *"Adam karov le-atzmo"* ("A man is his own next of kin.")

As for the mission theory, it may have had its justification when first promulgated by the anonymous Prophet of the last 27 chapters of the book of Isaiah. At that time, the other nations which were a part of Israel's world were all of them polytheists or worshipers of local deities. The conception of a single universal God whose rule was reflected in a universally valid moral law was the exclusive possession of Israel. To be in possession of so

important a truth and not to propagandize it was to fail to serve God properly. The mission theory was thus born and gave rise to a missionary activity carried on for centuries (particularly in later times by the school of Hillel) and only terminated when it was suppressed by the Roman Empire after the rise of Christianity.

In our day, however, Judaism has no monopoly of ethical monotheism and no special reason for propagandizing it. The mission theory was invoked by the authors of the Reform movement more for the purposes of apologetics than as a guide or motivation for Jewish religious living. There is moreover something of arrogance, a sin against religious humility, in the notion that one's *raison d'etre* is to teach others. To learn from others is no less important than to teach them.

How then shall we today conceive of the vocation of Israel? The answer to this question becomes clearer if we realize that the sense of a religious vocation is not confined to Judaism, that it is *inherent in any religious outlook on life.* It is no exaggeration to say that even the individual who views life from a religious angle must experience a sense of personal religious vocation. We acknowledge the sacredness of human personality. We are aware that every individual is unique, occupies a unique position in time and space, is uniquely conditioned by his heredity, his environment and the circumstances of his life. Hence every individual, if he is religious and has a sense of obligation and responsibility, must be aware of specific duties arising out of his unique relation to other persons and the world in which he lives. No parent will doubt for a moment that his responsibility to his children is a divine obligation which only he can fulfil and which he cannot delegate to others. But the same is true with all our other personal relations. It is true of our relation to the community as a whole. As American citizens, for example, each one of us must exercise his suffrage in accordance with his own conscience as that has been informed by his entire experience as a person. That pattern of behavior which we feel "called upon" to pursue in order to live a worthy life—that is our religious vocation.

What is true of individual personality is true of the personality of any group that interprets life in a religious spirit. Every such group has been uniquely conditioned by racial composition, geographical factors, cultural contacts, historical events, etc., etc. It occupies a unique place in human society. It has unique endowments and hence unique opportunities for enhancing the life of mankind and thus serving God. It has the duty of seeking an awareness of its opportunities and the obligations that go with them. The pattern of life that results from such awareness is its divine vocation. How else can faith in God function ethically if it does not involve belief in specific responsibilities of individuals and groups to contribute to the service of God the best that they are capable of giving?

From this analysis of the basis of our sense of religious vocation it is plain why the vocation of Israel remains a constant while its specific expression keeps assuming new forms. Since the religious vocation is the unique pattern of responsibilities and obligations to God deriving from the uniqueness of personality, that pattern must obviously be affected by every important change in the circumstance of life. When an individual marries, or gives birth to a child, or enters on a new job, or joins a new organization or assumes any new relationship whatever to indivduals or groups in his environment, his doing so always requires some modification of the pattern of his specific obligations

and therefore of the content of his religious vocation; but at no time in his life, is he without responsibility to God or without a religious vocation. The same is true of a people that views its collective life religiously. Its vocation is the totality of all that it feels "called upon" to do in order to make the most of its life. With every change in its fortunes and circumstances, it must give thought to the question, how it is called upon to react to the exigencies of the new situation, if it is to meet them in a way that adds to the worth of human life.

To discover what form the vocation of Israel should assume for our day, we must consult the world's needs and the resources and opportunities of the Jewish people for helping to meet those needs. These resources and opportunities will be conditioned by the specific characteristics of Jewish civilization and the special circumstances of Jewish life. By thus determining how our people can make a distinctive contribution in our day to the enhancement of human life, we shall provide at the same time an answer to the urgent question: What shall we live for as Jews? We shall not only be justifying our collective life to others; we shall be experiencing its worth ourselves; we shall be finding in it our self-realization or salvation.

CORRESPONDENCE

COMMENT ON "NATIONALISM AND RELIGION IN JUDAISM"

Sirs:

In reference to the essay by Rabbi David Polish on "Nationalism and Religion in Judaism," I wish to make the following comments:

1) It is idle for those who do not accept the scaffoldings of Orthodox Jewish faith to debate whether or not nationalism is kosher. In the mind of a Hasdai Ibn Shaprut or a Yehuda Halevi, Zion and the hope for a Messianic redemption fitted into a system of ideas that is completely foreign to the mentality of either the proponents or the opponents of Jewish nationalism. You cannot deal with the problem in two radically different realms of discourse without contributing to the clouds of confusion that enwrap this issue.

(2) No scholar doubts that, within the strictly Orthodox pattern of piety, there are elements distinctly opposed to the modern conception of secular nationalism. Those who wish to attach themselves to such trends of thought, abstracted from their contexts, may do so with as much or as little justification as their opponents.

(3) If Rabbi Polish's thesis is that religion and nationalism are not antithetical, it is well to remember that such a thesis is meaningless without exact definition and specification of circumstances. Nationality is a given fact; nationalism is an ideology. To have governments based upon the natural lines of nationality, is, in most cases, merely an implication of democracy. On the other hand, nationalism may assume forms that all ethical and deeply pious men would condemn.

(4) The claim that Jewish nationalism is different from European nationalism and is derived from indigenous sources is without importance. Similar claims can and are being made on behalf of every European group.

(5) The issue pro and con nationalism in Jewish life is like a festering sore in the body of the American Jewish community. It can be healed only by clear-minded, sober thinking. It is not an academic or historical question *in se*. It is a question of orientation toward the future. It is, "Shall the Jewish community, in America, in any particular country, or in the world seek to arrange its life, internally or externally, so as to achieve the status of a religious or national community? In the modern world, both types of status are available, and it is begging the question to seek to straddle this issue.

(6) This question, in turn, may be discussed from two different viewpoints—the one of historical necessity and the one of personal preference. The first one derives from the realization that Jewish life is subject to the molding influences of the environment. Thus, for the two greatest Jewries of the modern world, two radically different types of status seem to be decreed. The Jews of Soviet Russia are classified as a nationality, while we in America appear to be tending toward the attainment of the status of a religious minority.

(7) One may without self-contradiction labor for the emergence in Palestine of a rejuvenated Jewish nationality, while seeking to direct Jewish life in America toward the goal of the status of a religious community. Jewish life the world over is in transition and different lines of historical development may well be the fate of diverse sections of world Jewry.

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